

DESIGN DECISION-MAKING

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*4 key steps to using decisions
to drive your architecture concept*

1. Identify Decisions

The first step in great decision-making is to identify the decisions you will need to make throughout the course of your project. When you are starting out, it can be useful to brainstorm every single decision you can think of that will need to be made to reach a great endpoint for the project - without holding back or editing!

Once you have done this a few times, you will notice patterns, and can begin to group decision types together. Each project will require different inputs, but for example, a concept for an art gallery might require decisions about:

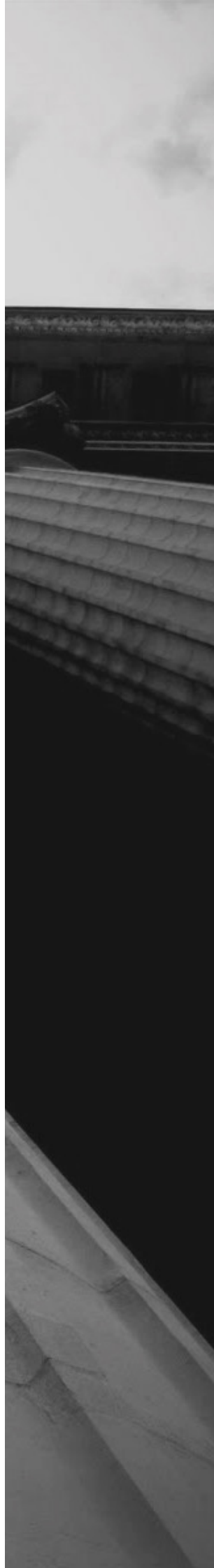
- Form (height, scale, size, linearity)
- Location (orientation, views, response to site)
- Circulation (entry, movement paths,
- Communication Style (hand-drawn, realistic renders)
- Structure (system, exposed or concealed, materials)

2. Evaluate Importance

Now that you have an idea of which decisions you will be making in the project, evaluating the importance of each decision allows you to focus your design input. There is no point wasting time and energy on design decisions which are minor in the scheme of things, and will have little consequence on your final design.

Try categorising your list of decisions by their potential impact. Give each decision a value of 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).

At Architecture School the 'big picture' decisions are usually allocated most importance, with more detailed elements given less consideration. This process roughly mirrors the early phases of a professional Architect's design process (see [here](#)) - where detail decisions come towards the end of the design and documentation.



3. **Make Choices**

Now that you have a sense of the most important decisions - jump into them! Don't mess around convincing yourself you are making progress by selecting the timber finishes or deciding the hallway width before you have dealt with the bigger picture.

Refer to your concept. If it is strong enough, it should guide you toward the right decisions. Steer clear of things just because you like them, or what other people tell you.

A good way to figure out the choices you already secretly know is to ask simple, but provocative questions: is it tall? is it white? is it smooth? is it warm? You will probably have a strong response: "Uhh, No way is it tall!" Suddenly, the decisions seem to make themselves.

If you really, really can't decide, chances are both options you are considering are equally valid. So make a call, and just go with one! Remember that you can always bring in aspects of other options later, or go back if you think things aren't working. But if you don't make a move, you're sitting still and can't go forwards or back.

4. **Reflect on Previous Decisions**

As you reach the end of your project, it is likely that your focus and concept will have narrowed, if not shifted significantly.

Now is the time to reflect back on early decisions. It is important to make sure that their roll-on affects are not just assumed parts of the design, but rather are still playing an active role in communicating your concept, and contributing to the strength of the design proposal.

It can also be useful to check on the depth and connectedness of your decisions. If you have recorded your decisions as you go, running back over this list can illuminate aspects that are no longer relevant, and where you could make new, stronger decisions. Can you now make some quick, less important decisions to back up your big, important decisions?

Finally, don't be afraid to let things go - sometimes decisions serve their purpose early on but don't have a place in the final design.